

## COMPULSORY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AND SCHOOL CENSUS IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

JANUARY 17, 1925.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the  
state of the Union and ordered to be printed

MR. KELLER, from the Committee on the District of Columbia,  
submitted the following

### REPORT

[To accompany S. 2842]

The Committee on the District of Columbia, to whom was referred the bill (S. 2842) to provide for compulsory school attendance, for the taking of a school census in the District of Columbia, and for other purposes, having considered the same, report favorably thereon and recommend that the bill do pass without amendment.

The District Commissioners have reported favorably on this bill, the Board of Education has indorsed it, and the Director of the Budget, under date of April 17, 1924, stated its provisions were not in conflict with the financial program of the President.

Similar legislation was introduced in the Sixty-seventh Congress; passed the Senate, but did not come up for a vote in the House.

The following tabulation compares the fundamental provisions of the Capper-Zihlman bill with the provisions of the present compulsory education law (No. 203, approved June 8, 1906). The provisions of the present law are to be found in the first column and the corresponding provisions of the Capper-Zihlman bill in the second column. The topics follow the order of topics in the bill rather than the law. Page references are to Senate bill 2842.

#### 1. COMPULSORY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

##### 1. AGES OF ATTENDANCE

###### UNDER PRESENT LAW

From 8 to 14 years of age. (Sec. 1.)

###### UNDER CAPPER-ZIHLMAN BILL

From 7 to 16 years of age. (Art. I, sec. 1, p. 1), except that a child of 14 years or over who has completed Grade VIII may be excused from school to be actually, legally, and regularly employed. (Art. I, sec. 2, p. 2.)

## 2. EDUCATIONAL STANDARD

No amount of education specified; any child may leave school at 14 years of age, no matter how little schooling he has received. Such child is not even required to be at work, but may leave school to roam the streets. (Sec. 1.)

A child 14 years old must have completed Grade VIII or remain in school until his sixteenth birthday.

This law establishes an educational standard of an elementary school education for most pupils. (Art. I, sec. 2, p. 2.)

## 3. EXCUSING FROM ATTENDANCE

If physical or mental condition renders instruction inexpedient or impracticable. (Sec. 1.)

If unable mentally or physically to profit from attendance, provided that he may be required to attend upon specialized instruction adequate to his needs. (Art. I, sec. 3, p. 2.)

## 4. VALID EXCUSES FOR ABSENCE

No provisions.

Board of Education required to define valid excuses for absence. (Art. I, sec. 4, p. 2.)

## 5. RECORDING ATTENDANCE

No record of attendance of pupils is required by present law. Rules of the Board of Education require the keeping of attendance records.

An accurate daily record of attendance is required of teachers in public, private, and parochial schools; of every private teacher. (Art. I, sec. 5, p. 3.)

## 6. REPORTING ABSENTEES

No report of absent pupils is required of public-school teachers, or of private or parochial schools, or of private teachers. (Sec. 2.)

Every principal or head teacher is required to report promptly to attendance officer names and addresses of absentees.

Attendance officers may act only after absence of three day sessions or six half-day sessions within period of five months.

Absentee pupil is reported after two day sessions or four one-half-day sessions in any school month, together with reason for absence. (Art. I, sec. 6, p. 3.)

Child may be absent three out of every four days and successfully evade present law. (Sec. 2.)

## 7. FINES FOR NONATTENDANCE

Persons who induce absence unlawfully from school or who employ absent child while school is in session shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor and be punished by a fine of not more than \$20. (Sec. 5.)

Parent, guardian, or other person residing permanently or temporarily in District having charge or control of child, who is unlawfully absent, shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and shall be punished by a fine of \$10 or by commitment to jail for five days, or both. Each two days child remains from school shall constitute separate offense. Upon conviction of first offense sentence may, upon payment of costs, be suspended and defendant placed on probation. (Art. I, sec. 7, pp. 3-4.)

## II. SCHOOL CENSUS

## 1. AGES OF ENUMERATED CHILDREN

No school census is now taken. Hence no record exists showing the children of school age who reside in the District and who are required by law to attend school.

Census of all children between 3 and 18 years of age.

Knowledge of children in District of Columbia of 3, 4, 5, or 6 years of age will make possible suitable preparation for receiving them into school.

Eighteen years is fixed as upper limit of enumeration because it is the approximate age of completing high school.

This census record will make it possible to enforce the school attendance law. (Art. II, sec. 1, p. 4.)

## 2. KEEPING CENSUS UP TO DATE

No provisions.

To be amended from day to day as changes of residence occur. (Art. II, sec. 1, p. 4.)

## 3. INFORMATION SECURED

No school census is now taken.

Record of enumeration of children shall give full name, address, race, sex, and date and place of birth of every such child, school attended by him, and if child is not at school, the name and address of his employer, and the name, address, and occupation of the parents or guardian. (Art. II, sec. 1, p. 4.)

Principal or head teacher of public, private, or parochial school or private teacher to report to director of department of school attendance and work permits name, address, sex, age, and race of every child under 18 years who enrolls or withdraws from school. (Art. II, sec. 2, p. 5.)

## 4. FINES FOR FAILURE TO COOPERATE

No provisions.

Any parent, guardian, custodian, principal, or teacher of child between ages of 3 and 18 who willfully neglects or refuses to provide information required by this act or who makes any untrue statement shall be guilty of misdemeanor and on conviction shall be punished by fine of \$10 or commitment to jail for five days, or both, at discretion of the court. (Art. II, sec. 3, p. 5.)

### III. ADMINISTRATION

#### 1. OFFICERS FOR ENFORCEMENT OF ACT

Two truant officers at \$600 per year each. (Actually provided in appropriations act and salary act, 11 attendance officers at \$1,400 per year each.)

Two inspectors in child labor law enforcement assigned from police department which is already undermanned.

Probation officers under Juvenile Court. (Sec. 4.)

Director, attendance officers, clerks, and other assistants.

Except director and clerks, all to be appointed on merit as result of competitive examination. (Art. III, sec. 2, pp. 5-6.)

#### 2. CHILD LABOR OFFICE TRANSFERRED

Child labor law office now functions directly under the superintendent of schools.

Inspectors under child labor law assigned from police department.

Child labor office and attendance office consolidated to form new department of school attendance and work permits, to operate under direct supervision of the director, and finally under superintendent of schools. (Art. III, sec. 1, p. 5.)

Inspectors under child labor law to be appointed hereafter by Board of Education. (Art. III, sec. 2, p. 6.)

By this consolidation closely related work of enforcing school attendance and issuing working certificates will be coordinated and made more effective.

#### 3. JURISDICTION

Juvenile Court has jurisdiction over truancy, incorrigibility, and child labor law cases. Police court has jurisdiction over cases arising under compulsory attendance law. (Sec. 2.)

Juvenile Court of the District of Columbia given jurisdiction in all cases arising from this act. (Art. III, sec. 3, p. 6.)

